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Issue 1193 >> October 10, 2013 >> $4.99
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GOOD GOLLY MISS *Miley!*

The HOT LIST 2013

The War on Gay Teens

The Last Days of Nirvana

'HOMELAND' RETURNS

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BLUE IS THE HOTTEST COLOR Our Hot Actress Adèle Exarchopoulos makes a crazy-sexy film debut.

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ON THE COVER Miley Cyrus photographed in Santa Monica, California, on August 29th, 2013, by **Theo Wenner**.
Styling by Emma Wyman. Makeup by Aaron de Mey for Sephora at Art Partner. Hair by Nikki Providence at Jed Root. Nail bracelet by Cartier, gold cuff by Eddie Borgo, link bracelet by Nikolai Rose.

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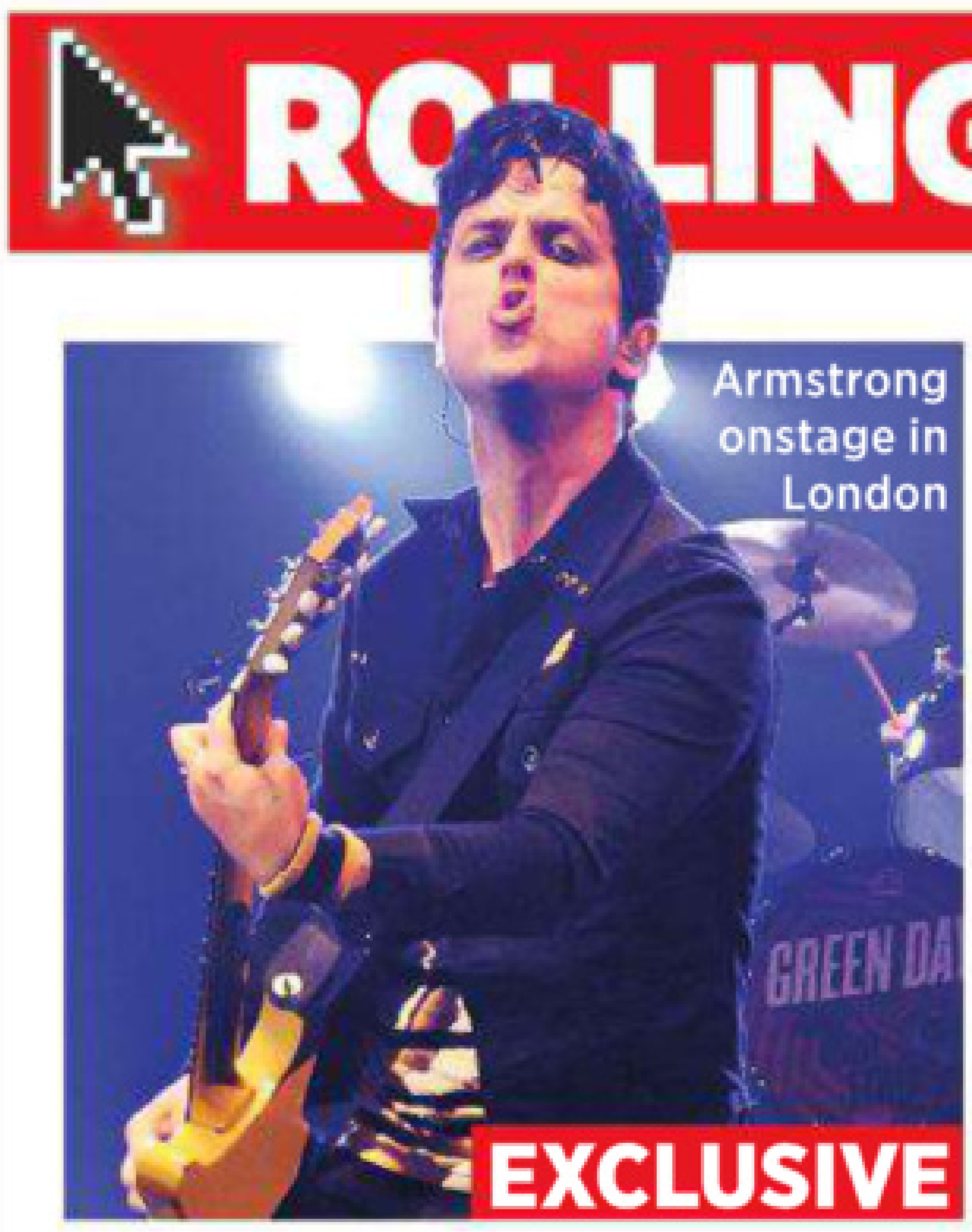
Armstrong onstage in London

GREEN DAY'S NEW MOVIE '¡CUATRO!'

The tumultuous birth of Green Day's superambitious three-album set *¡Uno!*, *¡Dos!* and *¡Tré!* is the subject of the new documentary *¡Cuatro!* Check out an exclusive clip of the group working its way through "Missing You."

FALL OUT BOY TEAM UP WITH RYAN ADAMS

Fall Out Boy recorded with Ryan Adams at the singer-songwriter's L.A. studio over the summer. "It was punk rock," says Pete Wentz. Check out an exclusive video for a track from their sessions.

Fall Out Boy and Adams (standing at right) in L.A.

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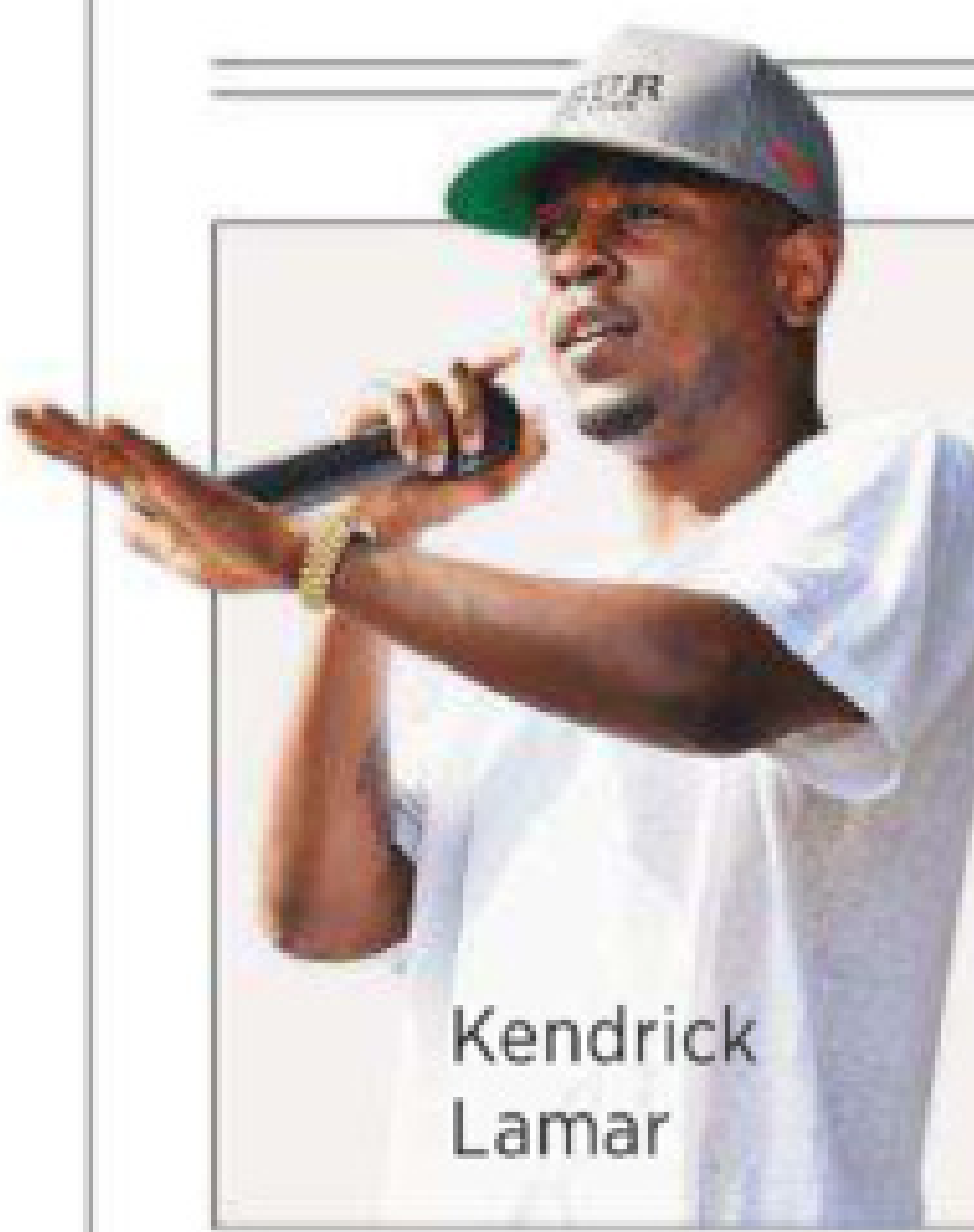
THE SEVEN CRAZIEST REPUBLICAN BILLS

From North Carolina's efforts to establish a state religion to Michigan's push to put guns in day-care centers, check out our list of the seven craziest bills introduced to state legislatures by an increasingly rabid Republican party.

BACKSTAGE IN NEW YORK WITH THE PIXIES

The Pixies are back with their first collection of new music in 22 years. Check out candid backstage shots from a New York-club show that introduced new bassist Kim Shattuck.

Frank Black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ROLLING STONE is printed on 100 percent carbon-neutral paper.

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The Hot List 2013

Storemags

BY JOSH EELLS

Good Golly Miss Miley!

America's wildest child knows what you think about her – and she totally doesn't care

PHOTOGRAPH BY THEO WENNER

IN THE BACKROOM OF A TATTOO PARLOR ON North La Brea Avenue in L.A., Miley Cyrus is about to get some new ink. "All right, face down," says the tattoo artist, a bald guy named Mojo. Miley flips onto her stomach and sticks her ass in the air. On the bottom of her dirty feet, in ballpoint pen, are written the words ROLLING (right foot) and $TONE (left). ¶ "People get tattoos of the most fucked-up shit," Miley says. "Did you know Alec Baldwin has Hannah Montana's initials tattooed on him? No, wait – Stephen Baldwin. He said he was my biggest fan, and I told him my biggest fans have tattoos. So he got HM tattooed on his shoulder." She shakes her head. "People do fucked-up shit." ¶ For her first ROLLING STONE cover story, Miley wanted to do something fun. "I thought about going to play laser tag," she says. "But laser tag sucks. And we could have gone bowling, but what are we, 90?" Naturally, the next idea was getting a tattoo.

"All right, darlin'," says Mojo. "You ready?"

"Ready," she says. Mojo fires up the needle, which begins buzzing extremely loudly. "I hate seeing the needle," says Miley. She cranes her neck backward. "Does it hurt? It hurts, right?"

Mojo: "Yeah, it hurts."

These are the 20-year-old pop star's first tattoos on her feet, but she has lots of others: a peace sign, an equal sign, a heart and a cross (all on her fingers); the words LOVE inside her right ear and JUST BREATHE over her rib cage; a Leonardo da Vinci sketch on her right forearm, and above it, the Roman numerals VIIXCI, for 7/91, the month and year her parents first met. And on the inside of her left forearm, the words SO THAT HIS PLACE SHALL NEVER BE WITH THOSE COLD AND TIMID SOULS WHO NEITHER KNOW VICTORY NOR DEFEAT. "It's from a Teddy Roosevelt speech," she says. "It's about how people judge who wins and who loses, but they're not the ones in there fighting." In other words, "It's about critics."

> "I think," says Miley, "that this is an important time not to Google myself."

Four days earlier, Miley performed at the VMAs. Maybe you heard about it. A lot of people got mad. Miley did things with a foam finger that made the inventor of the foam finger accuse her of having "degraded" an "icon." Most people thought it was Miley's fault, but Miley didn't care. That's what the Teddy Roosevelt quote is about. Haters gonna hate.

Mojo leans in with the needle. On the stereo, "Apache," by the Incredible Bongo Band, is playing. He writes the R, then the O. "How you doing?" he asks.

"Good," Miley says, gritting her teeth.

Then he does the L. "Mother*fucker!*"

Over on the couch, a guy named Cheyne is cracking up. Cheyne, 22, is Miley's assistant, and also her best friend. They've known each other for a long time, but Miley hired him only last year, before she went to Philadelphia and Miami to record her new album. Cheyne was working at Starbucks at the time. "And I was like, 'Fuck that,'" Miley says. "My best friend can't work at Starbucks! We've been working ever since."

Mojo, on the G, hits a nerve. "*Owwww!*" Miley screams.

"You hanging in there?" Mojo asks.

"I'm alive," she says.

"OK. We're almost done."

Mojo takes a quick break while Miley collects herself, and then finishes the job. "Easy!" Miley says. After, Mojo asks if she'll do him a favor. He takes out his phone and calls his 10-year-old daughter, Josie, who just started fifth grade.

"What a cool dad!" says Miley. "FaceTiming from the tattoo shop."

Josie's face pops up onscreen. "Hi, Daddy!" she says.

"Hi, sweet angel!" says Mojo.

Miley leans in. "Hey! I hear you make a face like me!" Josie smiles and sticks her tongue out, and Miley does the same. "Yay!" Miley says.

"OK, say good night," says Mojo.

"Good night!" says Josie.

"Adios!" Miley says. Mojo hangs up, and Miley hops down off the table and lands on her feet.

"Motherfucker!" she says.

IN THIS ERA OF DEEP NATIONal polarization, there's one thing on which we can pretty much all agree: It's an interesting time to be Miley Cyrus. She's been dealing with fame in varying degrees for her entire life, first as the daughter of country star Billy Ray Cyrus, whose "Achy Breaky Heart" was to 1992 what "Blurred Lines" is to 2013, then as the insanely popular Disney tween icon Hannah Montana. But all that was just a prelude to Miley 3.0, a tongue-wagging, hard-twerking, all-grown-up pop star, like it or not.

Miley has been planting the seeds for her big transition to adulthood for the past five years. She was 15 when she weathered her first scandal, when she posed for *Vanity Fair* wearing a sheet that made her look topless. ("I feel so embarrassed," she said in a statement. "And I apologize to my fans, who I care so deeply about.") A year later came a pole-dancing stunt at the Teen Choice Awards (the "pole" was on an ice cream cart; the dancing was PG at most). The following year she was photographed in Spain drinking a beer at age 17, and a month after that, TMZ posted a video of her taking a rip from a bong. (Miley claimed it was legal salvia.) And yet, in millions of people's eyes, she's still Hannah Montana – which may be part of the problem.

The morning after the tattoo shop, Miley sends a text: "What up, it's Miley." She wants to know if I can come to the house. "Maybe around 5? We could order some food and shit! Hang at the crib!"

Miley's crib is in Toluca Lake, halfway between Burbank and Studio City. It's the same crib the Cyruses moved into around the time Miley started working on *Hannah Montana*. She lived at home until she turned 18, and then bought her own place in the Hollywood Hills, with lots of glass and cool furniture and an aquarium in the fireplace. But she didn't really feel safe there by herself, and after a deranged fan jumped her fence wearing her dog's chew toy around his neck, Miley decided it was time to go. She moved back to her old house, and her parents moved a block down the street. Now she lives here with her four adopted dogs (Happy, Bean, Floyd and Mary Jane). But Miley says she still won't sleep in the master bedroom: "That's my parents' room!"

Contributing editor JOSH EELLS *wrote the Jon Hamm cover story in RS 1180.*

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There are also two racks of clothes in one of her living rooms that belong to Liam Hemsworth, 23, the Australian actor she met on a movie set in 2010. The couple had been engaged, but in mid-September, they announced that they had split up.

The neighborhood isn't what you'd expect: very suburban, very Valley, very Old Hollywood. Bob Hope lived in the house behind theirs. Miley never met him, but she did meet his widow, who lived there until she passed away in 2011. "Miss Dolores," Miley says. "She was party-rocking till the end! Sometimes I'd walk by and see all these people in there dressed up like old-time flappers. I was like, 'Is this real – or are you guys all ghosts?'"

Her neighbors now are a little more contemporary. "Diddy's baby mama lives right there," Miley says, pointing over the fence behind her pool. And down the street is Steve Carell, who has two preteen kids and doesn't sound like the biggest Miley fan. "He always gives me the stank-eye because I drive so fast," Miley says. "The other day I was trying to reverse and I almost hit a thousand things, and I was getting nervous because I could see him going" – she crosses her arms and lets out a big, annoyed sigh. "I'm like, oh, my God, Dan in Real Life is watching me right now!"

She just got back from New York, where she stayed for a few days after the VMAs. She didn't realize how big a deal her performance had been until she saw the news. Her instantly infamous medley of her single "We Can't Stop" and Robin Thicke's "Blurred Lines" owned cable TV for the next week, launched a million GIFs and prompted 161 complaints to the FCC. (Spring, Texas: "She groped a woman's posterior – without hesitation." West St. Paul, Minnesota: "Multiple very indecent sexual poses and gestures, from grabbing her crotch, using a foam finger like a dildo and licking the butt of a stuff bear." Dallas: "Pornagraphic dance by Miley Cyrus. Yuck! Will not list details. TOO GROSS.")

"I think," says Miley, "it's an important time not to Google myself."

Miley thought there was a chance the network might pull the plug on her mid-performance, but she didn't expect so much shock and vitriol. "Honestly, that was our MTV version," she says. "We could have even gone further, but we didn't. I thought that's what the VMAs were all about! It's not the Grammys or the Oscars. You're not supposed to show up in a gown, Vanna White-style" – a little dig at Taylor Swift. "It's supposed to be fun!"

Miley admits that her performance with Thicke got a little – her word – "handsy." But she makes a good point: "No one is talking about the man behind the ass. It was a lot of 'Miley twerks on Robin Thicke,' but never, 'Robin Thicke grinds up on Miley.' They're only talking about the one that bent over. So obviously there's a double standard." She was especially amused by the criticism from Brooke Shields, who played Miley's mom on *Hannah Montana* and called the VMA performance "desperate." "Brooke Shields was in a movie where she was a prostitute at age 12!" Miley says with a laugh.

"America is just so weird in what they think is right and wrong," she continues. "Like, I was watching *Breaking Bad* the other day, and they were cooking meth. I could literally cook meth because of that show. It's a how-to. And then they bleeped out the word 'fuck.' And I'm like, really? They killed a guy, and disintegrated his body in acid, but you're not allowed to say 'fuck'? It's like when they bleeped 'molly' at the VMAs. Look what I'm doing up here right now, and you're going to bleep out 'molly'? Whatever."

Miley admits that before the telecast, she was feeling a little nervous. But then she got a visit in her dressing room that made her feel better. Kanye West had seen her rehearsals and wanted to talk to her before she went onstage. "He came in and goes, 'There are not a lot of artists I believe in more than you right now,'" she recalls. "The whole room went quiet. I was like, 'Yo – can you say that again?!'" She laughs. "I just kept repeating that over and over in my mind, and it made me not nervous."

After the show, Miley and Kanye met up at a Manhattan recording studio to work on a remix for his song "Black Skinhead." The next day he sent a text: "He said, 'I still can't quit thinking about your performance,'" Miley says. She also happened to mention that a pair of fur Céline slippers she'd bought were falling apart, and Kanye bought her five more pairs. "Kanye is the shit," she says. "I kind of have a good relationship with him now. It's good to have someone you can call and be like, 'Yo, do you think I should wear this?' 'Do you think I should go in the studio with this guy?' 'Do you think this is cool?' That's what homies are supposed to do."

Miley isn't bothered by people who called her performance a disaster. "I wasn't trying to be sexy," she says. "If I was trying to be sexy, I could have been sexy. I can dance a lot better than I was dancing." She knows sticking her tongue out isn't hot and that those weird stubby pigtails aren't flattering ("I look like a little creature"). And she even knows it's ridiculous for her to twerk. "People are like, 'Miley thinks she's a black girl, but she's got the flattest ass ever,'" she says. "I'm like, I'm 108 pounds! I know! Now people expect me to come out and twerk with my tongue out all the time. I'll probably never do that shit again."

If there's one thing that bothered her about the fallout, it was the idea that her performance was racist, or a "minstrel show," because, critics argued, she appropriated a dance style common in black culture and used black backup dancers like props. "I don't keep my producers or dancers around 'cause it makes me look cool," she says. "Those aren't my 'accessories.' They're my homies." Meanwhile, she argues, the idea that she's somehow playing black is absurd. "I'm from one of the

Twerking on a Dream

From ruling the Disney Channel as Hannah Montana to blowing up MTV with the wildest VMA performance ever, we chart Miley's evolution from America's sweetheart to the hardest-twerkin' girl in show business

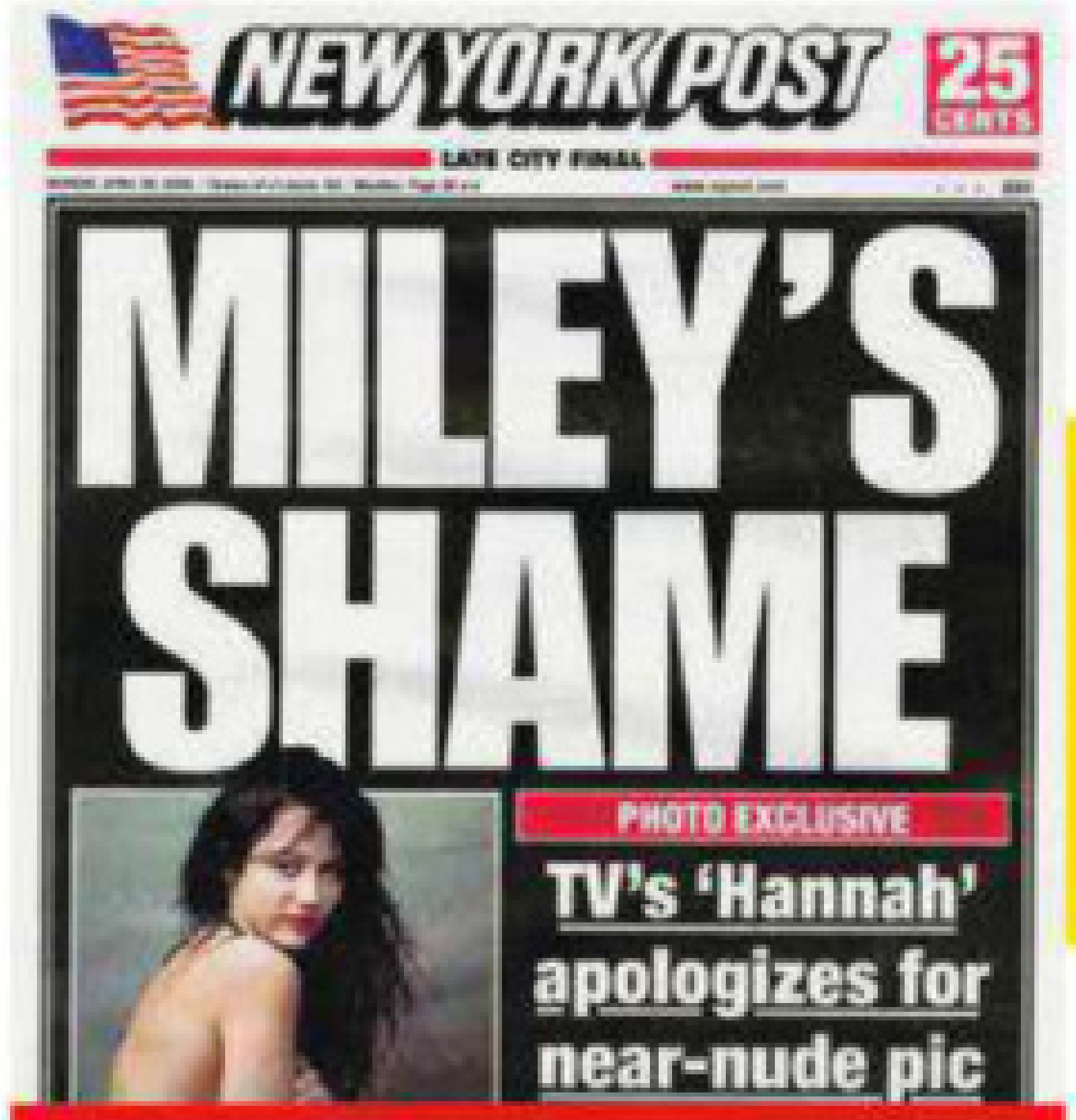
2006 Miley (with Billy Ray) on *Hannah Montana*, which made her a star

2007 On the blockbuster Best of Both Worlds Tour

FROM LEFT: © DISNEY CHANNEL/EVERETT COLLECTION; © MARY DUGGAN/PHOTOLINK.NET

wealthiest counties in America," she says. "I know what I am. But I also know what I like to listen to. Look at any 20-year-old white girl right now – that's what they're listening to at the club. It's 2013. The gays are getting married, we're all collaborating. I would never think about the color of my dancers, like, 'Ooh, that might be controversial.' What do you mean?" she says with a laugh. "Times are changing. I think there's a generation or two left, and then it's gonna be a whole new world."

After a while, Miley gets hungry, so Cheyne orders some sushi from a nearby spot, and we all hop in the car to go pick it up. Her main ride these days is a cream-colored 2014 Maserati Quattroporte, which Miley bought a few weeks ago. The back seat feels like an airport lounge on wheels. We pull out of her gate, and three paparazzi camped out on her street follow in pursuit. At the sushi place, the valet keeps them at bay while Miley waits in the car.



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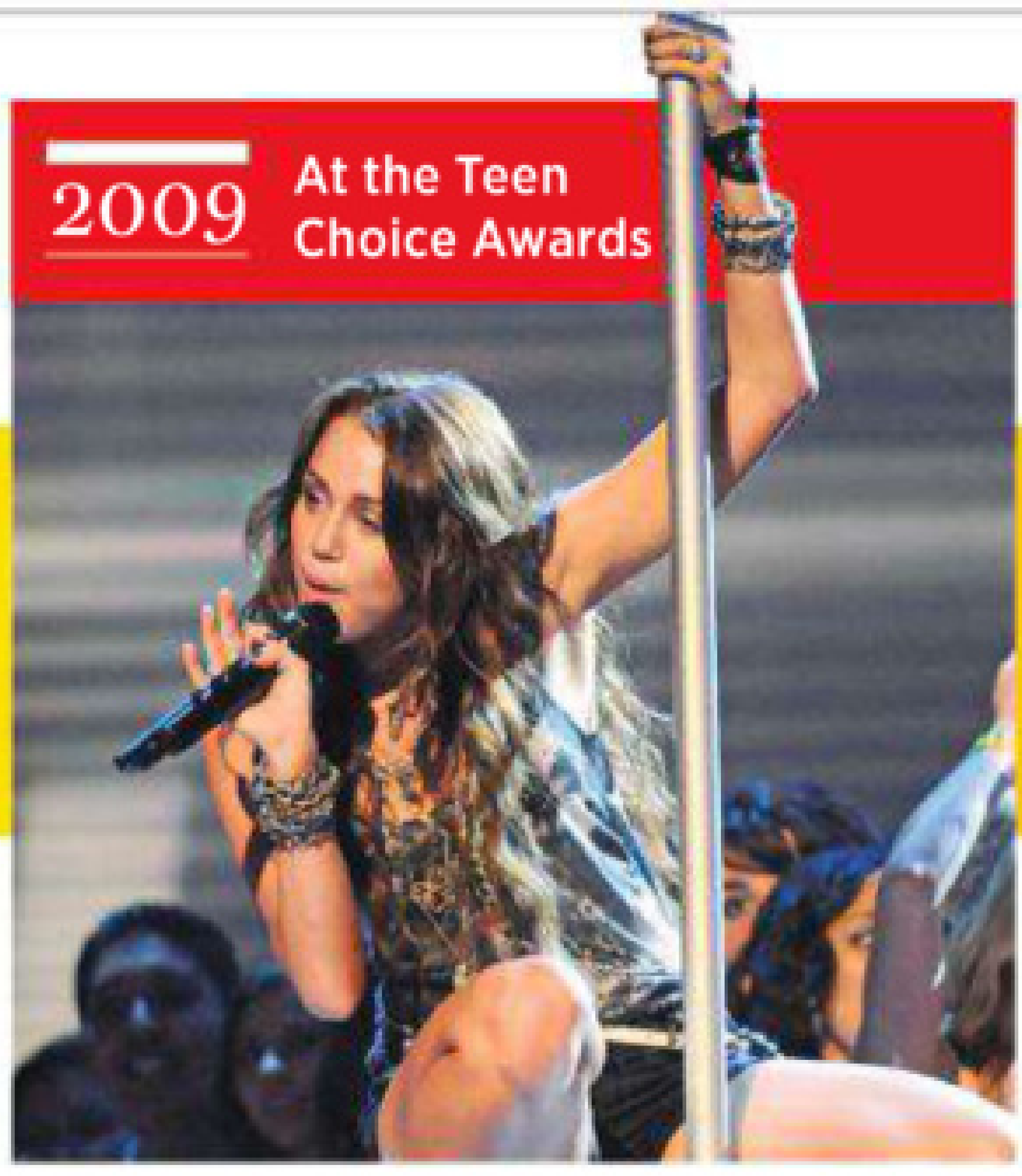
MILEY'S SHAME

PHOTO EXCLUSIVE

TV's 'Hannah' apologizes for near-nude pic

2008 *Vanity Fair* pic was the first controversy.



2009 At the Teen Choice Awards

2010 Miley with co-star and eventual ex-fiance Liam Hemsworth in *The Last Song*

Parked next to us is a black Range Rover. "I'm not gonna lie," she says. "I think that might be Bieber's." I ask her if she hangs out with him. "A little bit," she says. "But not really. I'm not much older than him, so I never want it to feel like I'm mentoring him. But I do mentor him in a way. Because I've been doing this shit for a long time, and I already transitioned, and I don't think he's quite done it yet.

"He's trying really hard," she adds. "People don't take him seriously, but he really can play the drums, he really can play guitar, he really can sing. I just don't want to see him fuck that up, to where people think he's Vanilla Ice. I tell him that. Like, 'You don't want to become a joke. When you go out, don't start shit. Don't come in shirtless.' But the thing is," she says with a laugh, "I think boys are, like, seven years behind. So in his head, he's really, like, 12."

After a few minutes Cheyne comes back with the food, and we head out. On the way home, Miley bumps a few tracks from her new album, *Bangerz*, including one with Britney Spears and producer Mike WiLL Made It (who did eight songs) and one produced by Pharrell (who did four).

Back at the crib, Miley inhales some spicy tuna in front of her laptop. She wants to see the video for her new single "Wrecking Ball," which at that point had yet to be released. On the screen, Naked Miley appears, licking a sledgehammer and writhing around a demolition site. On one close-up shot of her face, she sheds a tear. "That was real," Miley says proudly. "My dog just passed away."

Miley thinks people will be shocked when the video comes out, because it's the last thing they expect from her: real art. She wants very much to be taken seriously as an artist, not just in the musical sense, but overall. Lately she's been getting into fashion – mostly vintage Versace and Dolce from 1992, the year she was born.

We graze on the sushi for a while and then Miley brings out a tin of vegan brownies that her chef made, and everyone dives in. "You know," she says after a bit, "when they asked me what I wanted to do with you, my other suggestion was sky diving. But you declined."

I tell her that's the first I've heard of it. Should we go sky diving?

"Should we?" she says. "It'd be fun...."

Cheyne shakes his head. "Hell, no."

"I've always wanted to," she says. "It would be so scary. We should do it."

THE FIRST TIME MILEY stole the show, she was two years old. It was November 1994 – a week after her second birthday. Her dad was on a Nashville talk show called *Music City Tonight*. He's on the downslope of his fame, but not by much. His mullet looks magnificent.

He's getting interviewed when one of the hosts asks him a mildly pointed question about how, before he was married, he'd fathered two babies. (In fact, the moms were two different women who were pregnant at the same time.) Blindsided, he squirms for a second, trying to come up with something positive. Just then, as if to save him, out toddles Miley, one of said babies (Billy Ray married her mom, Tish, in 1993), wheeling a tiny pink stroller with a Willie Nelson doll tucked inside.

The crowd *awwwws*. Billy Ray hops up and runs over to her. She's wearing a gingham dress with a polka-dot collar, and her strawberry-blond hair is up in a bow. The audience applauds, and Miley starts to clap too. The cameras don't faze her at all. She climbs into one of the host's laps, and her dad tells her to "look at the camera and do your eyes one time." Miley looks straight into the lens and rolls her eyes theatrically. Two years old and she's already a star. "This is very dangerous!" says the host, eating it up. "You're gonna be in big trouble when she's, what, 12 or 13?"

Billy Ray named his daughter Destiny Hope because he thought it was her destiny to bring hope to the world. (She legally changed it to Miley, a childhood nickname, in 2008.) She grew up on a 500-acre farm outside Nashville, near a town called Thompson's Station. "There wasn't even a streetlight," she says. "My dad put up all the streetlights and stop signs because there was nothing around. He's kind of like the mayor, because the city wouldn't even have lights if it wasn't for him. Now they have a Starbucks, and it's so weird."

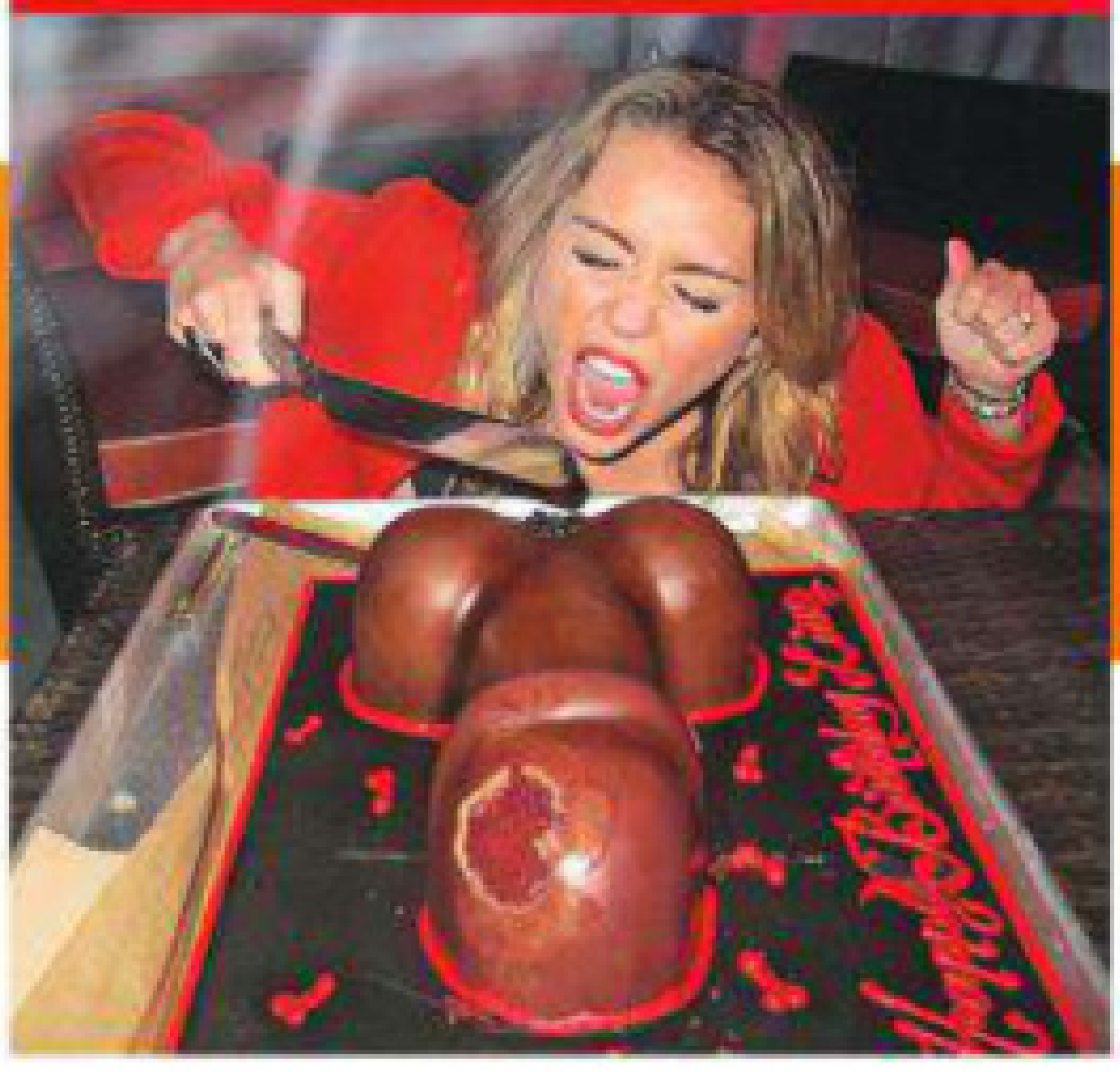
As a kid, Miley was always outside. "I'm still kind of a semi-nudist, because I never had clothes on," she says. She grew up riding 4x4s (which she loved) and horses (which she was less crazy about). She was a funny, outgoing, slightly strange kid who liked cheerleading, Limp Bizkit and Hilary Duff. Sometimes she would go on tour with her dad, and her job would be to go onstage after the show and pick up all the bras and underwear. "I'd get a really big one and be

FROM LEFT: "NEW YORK POST"; KEVIN MAZUR/TCA 2009/WIREIMAGE; SAM EMERSON/TOUCHSTONE PICTURES

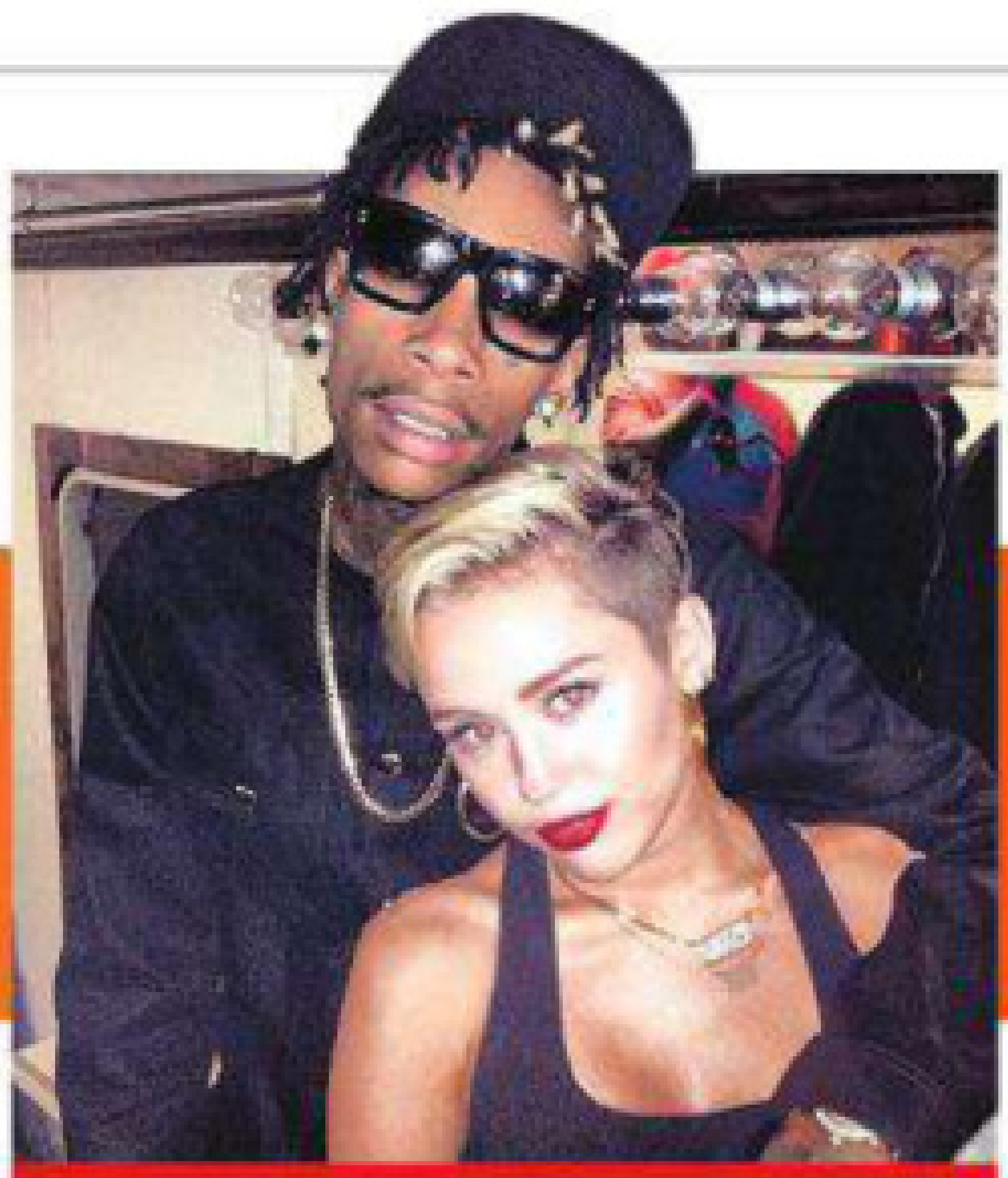
like, 'Dad! I found your biggest fan!'" she says, laughing. He paid her $10.

Miley went to a private evangelical school for a year, until she got kicked out for either a) stealing her teacher's motorized scooter or b) telling the rest of the class what "French kissing" was. (She's not quite sure.) She was 11 when she first auditioned for *Hannah Montana*. Her dad didn't want her to do it, but she eventually wore him down. "I think he just didn't want me to feel any kind of rejection," she says. "He didn't want me to be hurt by the industry."

Miley's transformation from America's sweetheart into whatever the hell she is now kicked into high gear three years ago, when she went to Detroit to shoot a movie called *LOL*. "Detroit's where I felt like I really grew up," she says. "It was only for a summer, but that's where I started going to clubs, where I got my first tattoo. Well, not my first tattoo, but my first without my mom's consent. I got it on 8 Mile! I lied to the guy and told him I was 18. I got a heart on my finger and wore a Band-Aid for two months so my mom wouldn't find out." She also bonded with her co-star, Demi Moore, whose rocky relationship with Ashton Kutcher was becoming a major tabloid story. "That was dope, because I think we needed each other at that point," Miley says. "We both needed to get out of L.A."

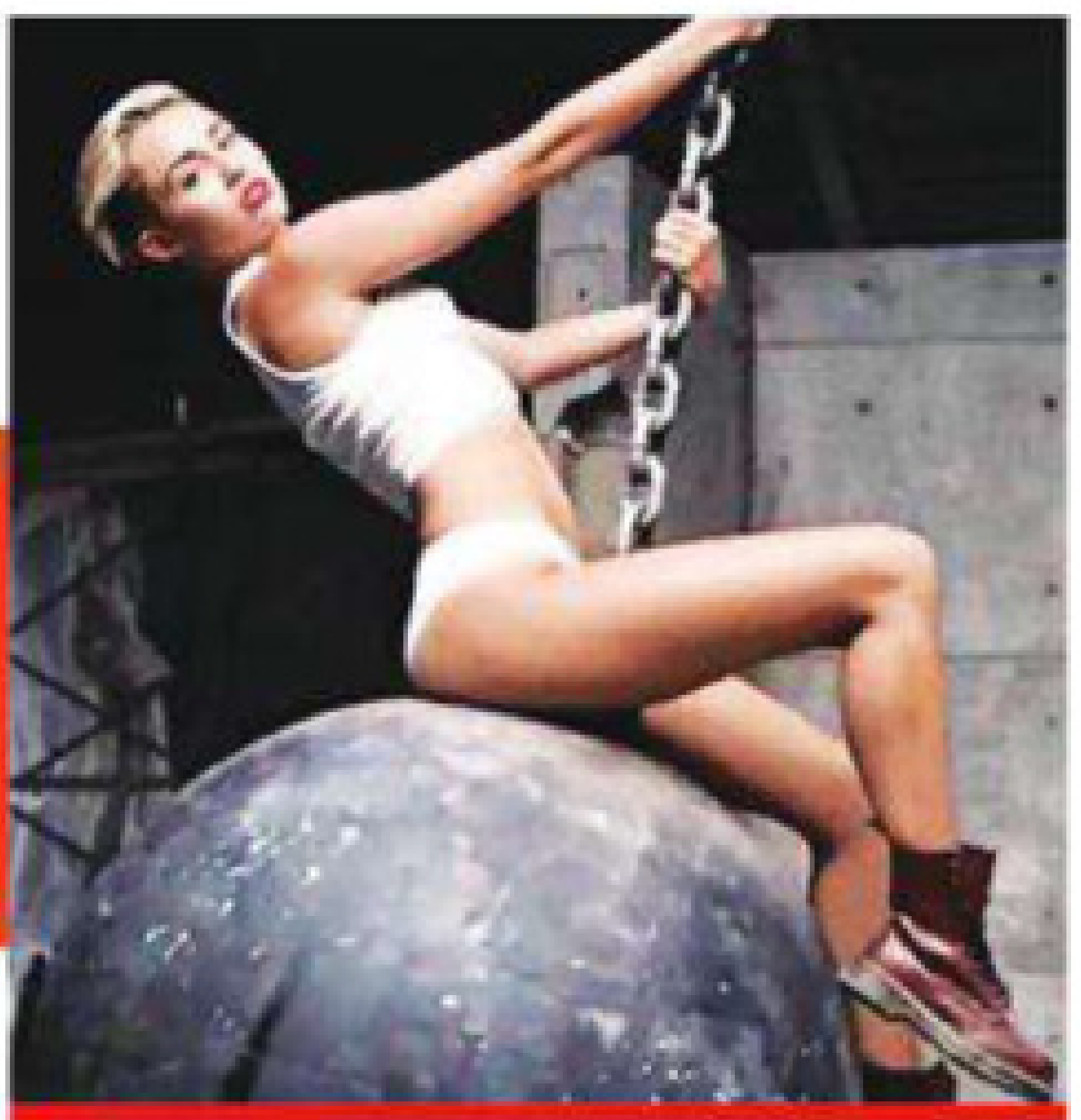


2012 Celebrating Hemsworth's birthday



2013 Hanging with buddy Wiz Khalifa

2013 Shocking the VMAs



2013 The "Wrecking Ball" video: All grown up!

FROM LEFT: TMZ.COM/SPLASH NEWS; WIZ KHALIFA/INSTAGRAM; JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC FOR MTV; BAUER-GRIFFIN.COM

But it was last summer, in Philadelphia, where she really found her new style. She was living there with Hemsworth, who was filming a movie with Harrison Ford. "Best summer ever," Miley says. "Have you ever been to South Street in Philly? That's where I got my first chain. Sixteen bucks – not real," she says, laughing. "I was away from people for a minute, and I just started feeling my own vibe. I bought a pair of Doc Martens. I shaved my head. Driving a fucking Ford Explorer around. Just blending in."

Shortly after she started to record *Bangerz*, Miley cleaned house. "I basically cut off all ties," she says. "I got rid of my manager, I got rid of my label. I just started over. I really wanted to stay with my manager, but I feel like this" – her recent evolution – "would have scared them. I just don't think they would've had as much faith in what I'm doing."

Miley has since hired Britney Spears' manager, Larry Rudolph, but she's still the one in control. Her life is remarkably handler-free – no publicists hanging around, no minders telling her what she can and can't do. "I hung out with way too many adults when I was a kid," she says. "So now I don't want to hang out with any adults. I've already done all the hard work. Now I can kind of fuck off." Her video for "We Can't Stop" was inspired by just such fun – an epic two-day house party with a bunch of the homies that moved from a friend's home in the Hills to the beach in Malibu and back. At one point, Miley fell asleep in front of a fireplace and melted her Docs. Around dawn, everyone went up to the roof to watch the sun rise, and Miley kept singing the "We Can't Stop" line that goes, "This is our house, this is our rules," but rewriting it as, "This is our house, this is our roof."

These days Miley is pretty close to her parents. She sees them about once a week. "My dad's always home," she says. "He's like, 'There's nothing for me to do out here.' So he chills at the house all day, and I go see him." One time she went out to her backyard and saw a shadowy figure in the bushes. "I thought I was gonna get murdered," she says, "and then I see my dad climbing my fence. He's like, 'Sissy! I found a secret path where I can get from my house to your house without having to go on the street!' I'm like, 'Dad, you definitely just trespassed through someone's yard.'"

She spends more time with her mom, Tish, whom Miley says dreamed of being a performer herself, but couldn't because of bad anxiety. "She danced ballet from the time she was three till she was 30, but she was very shy," Miley says. "She could never do this, so she wanted it for me. I get anxiety too, and she didn't want my anxiety to ever stop me from doing it the way it stopped her." Her mom often travels with her, but she can still make Miley cringe. "When she's being embarrassing, she'll call me 'sweet girl,'" Miley says. "When we were getting ready for the VMAs, I was about to put on my teddy-bear costume and she's like, 'Sweet girl, do you need to potty before you put your costume on?' I'm like, 'Mom! Kanye is standing right here!'"

For a while, Miley's dad was pretty upset with her partying ways. In 2011, he gave an interview to *GQ* where he said if he could go back in time and stop her from being Hannah Montana, he would. But Miley says they've gotten to a better place. "We have a different relationship now," she says. "Now I hear all these crazy stories from him. Like, I never knew my dad smoked weed. I thought my dad was a freak. Now I know he was just stoned."

THE NEXT MORNING, Cheyne is down in the kitchen getting ready for the trip. Up in her bedroom, Miley sends him a text: "I think I'm having a panic attack."

We've decided to go sky diving. Everybody is pretty scared, but nobody wants to be the one to back out. "I can't believe we're doing this," Miley says when she comes down. She's wearing a white tank top and red track pants, with her hair in her little-creature pigtails. She grabs a couple of Gatorades and we hit the road.

We're driving to a town called Perris, out in the desert on the way to Palm Springs. It's home to Skydive Perris, supposedly one of the best sky-diving spots in the country. The plan was to leave early enough that the paparazzi wouldn't be there yet, but two of them are already waiting. "Should I tell them I'll give them a picture and then fuck off?" Miley asks.

Cheyne nods and pulls over. "Yo, we're gonna give you a picture right now if you don't follow us around all day long," he says. The paps agree.

"And then you're gonna fuck off?" says Miley.

"Yeah."

"Promise?"

"Yeah."

"OK," Miley says. She hops out of the car and poses for 30 seconds in front of a Dumpster, then hops back in and we're on our way. ("I'll usually give them a picture and they're pretty cool," she says. "I actually don't really get the point of paparazzi anymore. It's not like back in the day where they sold pictures to magazines. Now they just put them online. I don't really know how they make money.")

Cheyne does 90 on the 210, driving past Pomona, Chino, Riverside. Pretty soon we're deep into the Inland Empire, surrounded by broken-down cars and yucca trees. "The desert is so weird," Miley says. "This is where all the tweakers live. It's like *Breaking Bad* for real. They go down to the local taco shop and sell meth. Meth country. Meth town."

She turns to Cheyne. "You think we might be able to see the ocean?"

"If it's clear," he says.

"We gotta keep doing stuff that's really crazy," Miley says. "I need my own Rolling Stone column where every issue it's just something crazy I do."

We're about 15 minutes away when she starts pointing at something through the windshield. "Oh, my God," Miley says. "You can see people falling from the sky right now!" Up ahead, a few thousand feet above the horizon, some black dots are drifting down to Earth. "Oh, my God," she says. "Why is homeboy spinning around? He's upside down! He just went upside down!"

> **"People are like, 'She's got the flattest ass ever,'" Miley says. "I'm like, 'I know!'"**

We pull into the parking lot, and Miley meets Scott Smith, her instructor for the day. Scott has been parachuting since 1978; he's made more than 12,000 jumps. "I trust you," she says. "But I'm scared."

"Good," says Scott. "There's two kinds of people who make their first jump – those who are scared, and those who lie." He takes her to sign a bunch of release forms, and Miley has a laugh about the line that says, "Parachutes do not always work." For her emergency contact, she puts her mom; for her job, she puts "unemployed." "If I die," she tells Scott, "you guys are so fucked."

While we wait for our turn, Miley stands outside chain-smoking cigarettes as a few dozen fans take turns coming up to get pictures with her. Most of them compliment her on the VMAs. "Stick your tongue out!" one grandmother tells her. Then it's time to suit up.

As we wedge ourselves into the plane, Miley and Cheyne grip each other's hands tight. We climb for about 15 minutes – rising to 8,000 feet, 9,000, 10,000. "We're seriously about to jump out of this plane right now," Miley says. Finally, at 12,500 feet, the plane levels off. The door opens, and Miley and Scott scoot over to it. She hangs her toes over the edge, as the desert races by below. Cheyne, who does not seem to be having fun, grits his teeth and glares. "Miley fucking Cyrus!" But she's already out the door.

Six minutes later, everyone is safe on the ground. "Holy shit!" Miley says. "That was awesome!" She calls her mom and tells her she's alive. "One thing about sky diving," she says, "you really know who you love, based on who you call." I ask her if she talked to Liam already. "Oh, shit!" she says, and takes her phone back out. (Two weeks later, the couple will announce their split.)

Back in the car, Cheyne opens his GPS and plots a course for one of their favorite fast-food spots, a SoCal-only chain called Baker's Drive-Thru. "It's like a Mexican White Castle," Cheyne says. "It's so good," says Miley. She orders a taco burger with everything and a giant soda. "We just jumped out of a motherfuckin' plane!" she says. "You can't tell me nothin'!"

On the way back to L.A., Miley's phone buzzes. "This is why I love Pharrell so much," she says, then reads a text that he sent her out loud. It's at least 1,000 characters long; she scrolls forever. "The VMAs was nothing more than God or the Universe showing you how powerful anything you do is," he says at one point. "It's like uranium – it has the power to take over lives or power entire countries. Now that you've seen your power, master it."

"You're not a train wreck," he says later in the text. "You're the train pulling everyone else along."

Back at the crib, Miley, drained from all the adrenaline, goes upstairs to take a nap. When she comes back down a few hours later, she still feels funny. "Have you been having any shakiness?" she asks. "I just started getting dizzy – I had to sit for a second." She takes a deep breath. "My heart is going a thousand miles per hour. I think maybe it gave me a little vertigo!" In the kitchen, Cheyne makes her a drink – Gatorade and Malibu – and Miley gets her bearings. She checks her phone and reads a text from Lil' Kim out loud: "My little pumpkin, I just had to tell you you're so fucking smart. I love you and all the press you are getting. Sad I didn't run into you at the VMAs. Keep killing it, boo." Miley laughs. "My little pumpkin!"

Miley goes back upstairs to change. When she comes back down, in a punky black-leather miniskirt and big black Chanel boots, two of her friends have shown up: Thom, a young Australian actor on an NBC summer show (he's also Cheyne's roommate), and Janelle, his jewelry-designer girlfriend.

Miley doesn't actually go out very much. ("I call myself Rapunzel with a mohawk. Standing by my window, looking at the paparazzi, just wanting to leave the crib.") But tonight we're going to what she promises is the best club in L.A.: Beacher's Madhouse, at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.

Everyone piles into an SUV, with Miley checking her lipstick in the passenger seat. Cheyne leads the way, and our whole crew blows past the line in the lobby and gets escorted to a prime corner booth, which Miley calls "the birdcage." The promoter gives her a hug and sends over a bottle of vodka. The club, which features a twisted, live-action roving variety show, feels like something out of Stefon's wet dreams: There's an old male stripper in leather hot pants, fishnet-wearing go-go dancers, a miniature Psy dancing to "Gangnam Style." Amazon Ashley, the six-foot-seven burlesque dancer whom Miley mimed anilingus on at the VMAs, comes over, topless, except for pasties, and gives her a massive hug. "I Believe I Can Fly" plays on the PA, and a bummed-looking Oompa-Loompa, who is attached to a cable via a hook on the back of his overalls, gets hoisted up to the ceiling and dropped down to a table of girls, where he delivers a bottle of liquor.

We stay until the club shuts down, and then some. Miley spends the whole night dancing on a banquette and drinking Malibu. Afterward, Cheyne orders a couple of Uber cars, and about a dozen of Miley's friends pile in and head to their friend Ryan's house in the Hollywood Hills. The afterparty feels like something out of Miley's "We Can't Stop" video: a bunch of hip, pretty young people partying in a house that's way too nice. Suddenly, Miley gets excited. "This is actually the house!" she says. "The 'This is our house, this is our roof' house – this is the place! And these are the homies!" She can't stop smiling. "We're really living that life!"